

A parish in the heart of Canterbury has celebrated the success of an Evening service whose congregation has jumped from just one person to



St Paul's Without the Walls has seen its evening service of choral music and traditional liturgy grow in popularity after introducing a home cooked meal.

The idea came to parishioner Michael Keeler-Walker following suggestions the service would be stopped.

He said: "We had Choral Evensong once a month, but often it was irregular and sometimes just dropped.

"Despite a choir of 18, often the only congregant would be the person doing the reading.

"So, we decided to go back to basics. It became regular, each month, focussing on good food, good fellowship, good preaching, and good music."

A home cooked meal is now offered after each service and the church has seen a large increase in worshippers.

Beginning prior to the pandemic, and despite the Government restrictions over the last few years, the services have continued to thrive following lockdown, with guest preachers attracting more congregants and swelling the choir's ranks.

"People are drawn to our services and even after the pandemic we have had more than 50 people coming to services," Michael added.

"We're interacting with people we never did before and it's been hugely enriching for the parish."

The efforts of St Paul's Without the Walls has been celebrated online, and dozens of parishes have been in contact to learn to replicate the success.

"The Book of Common Prayer is seeing a real revival in churches across the country," said Bradley Smith, [the Prayer Book Society](#) chairman.

"New generations are discovering the beauty, depth and majesty of these words, many through services of Choral Evensong such as in St Paul's Canterbury."

#### **More information:**

- The Book of Common Prayer is a [permanent feature of the Church of England's worship](#) and a key source for doctrine.
- Written in 1662, Church of England churches often have services available based on the liturgy from the Prayer Book. To find your local church you can visit [A Church Near You](#).

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